

TEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

A THEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION IN KERALA — PROBLEM STATE OF INDIA

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Constantine Manalel

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF POLITICS

P. T. Chacko

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE CALL TO REVOLUTION

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THE SOCIO-POLITICAL PROBLEM OF KERALA

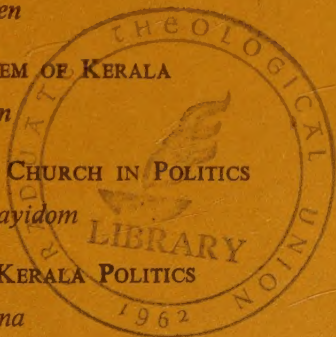
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THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE KERALA CHURCH IN POLITICS

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JEEVADHARA

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The Problem of Man

A THEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL
OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION
IN KERALA—PROBLEM STATE OF INDIA

Editor:

P. T. Chacko

Theology Centre,
Alleppey,
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JEEVADHARA

A Journal of Christian Interpretation

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Introduction

“The water that I shall
give him will become
in him a spring of water
welling up to eternal life”.

(Jn 4/14)

FROM its achievements, and the new outlook it has created, the Second Vatican Council appears to have been another Pentecost, a second springtime of renewal in the Church, bringing with it rejuvenation and promise. The Church, of course, had been growing all along, in self-knowledge and self-criticism, and had gradually become aware of the need for reform. What the Council did was to recognize and confirm intuitions, new aspects of faith, re-orientations and new approaches which had been voiced by theologians and Church reformers for more than half a century, as a result of their returning to the sources of our knowledge of revelation, and of re-thinking the faith of the Church. There is no turning back from the new path she has begun to tread, nor will the stirrings of renewal subside. It is up to all men of good will to spread the teachings of the Council, and to imbibe and suffuse their spirit throughout the Church. This, then, is one of the important aims of *Jeevadhara** within its limited scope.

* A Malayalam word, meaning “Life-Current,” and pronounced dʒi:vadha:ra

Cool winds of freedom blow in the new spring-time, and co-responsibility spreads its green carpet everywhere. Love begins to blossom, and service gives out its fragrance. But a storm is brewing, at the same time; a crisis is building up, which threatens to wreck this renewal. It was only to be expected, considering the nature of the Council's teachings. There had been, all along, the likelihood of two outlooks, one conservative the other progressive, pulling apart. Some, in the Church, with no clear ideas of what the Council has been saying, have misunderstood its reforms. Others, while accepting them, interpret them according to their own convenience. The real danger lies in a polarization between the conservatives who shrink from the renewal, fearing a crisis, and the progressives who despair of achieving it, and set no limits to their forebodings. *Jeevadhara* will constantly endeavour to keep the danger at bay, and effect a dialogue between these opposite sides.

Nor will the dialogue stop there. This periodical will aspire towards creating better understanding within the Christian fold, and beyond that, among the various faiths that are all concerned with the same fundamental issues. It also envisages, as a long-range aim, the fostering of mutual recognition between East and West, of common underlying interests, in spite of cultural and other differences. The immediate purpose, then, of this journal will be to present theology in three perspectives: Biblical, ecumenical and Indian. The Gospel spreading through the world encounters different philosophies, arts, literatures and cultures, and takes on different outward forms but embodies itself as essentially the same in all. Thus different Catholic theologies

take shape. This pluralism of theologies is an accepted fact in the Church today. One of the concerns of *Jeevadhara* will be to help in evolving an Indian theology Biblical in its emphasis and ecumenical in its ambit, in the background of the Indian way of life and thought.

Theology must be linked with life, so live problems will be dealt with in these pages. An attempt will be made to give, in the light of theology, answers to questions that arise in different spheres of human activity and at crucial moments when people find themselves in two minds about the proper way to think or act. The choice of topics, therefore, will be determined by the needs of the reader rather than the academic interests of the specialist. The treatment of the topics will be such as to carry what is said dynamically into the reader's life instead of dealing in curious dialectics. For the force of its statements, opinions and propositions *Jeevadhara* will rely on the reasons and arguments put forward in the articles, and the evidence adduced in support of them.

A unique feature of this journal, as far as India is concerned, is that it is published in two languages, English and Malayalam. On the editorial board are some of the most eminent theologians of Kerala, many of them professors in Major Seminaries in and outside Kerala. What is offered, then, is a concerted effort of the best theological minds in our part of the world. The whole of Christian theology has been divided into six areas, each under the editorship of a theological expert. The joint guidance of the board, it is hoped, will enable this journal to fulfil the aspirations summed up in the title *Jeevadhara* making it a Life-Current. The

whole of Theology, after all, deals with God's initiative in communicating His life to man, and with man's sharing in that Life. The Bible presents Christ's revelation as the living water, with Christ as its source. *Jeevadhara* will strive to be the current of the living water that flows from God into men's lives.

Theology Centre,
Alleppey.

Constantine Manalel
(General Editor)

Editorial

IT may be surprising to many to find the very first number of a theological publication devoting itself to political discussions. Some may even wonder whether in Kerala, where everything is imbued with politics, God Almighty and theology too have been affected by it! The task of bringing theology down from the clouds to the firm earth has already been done and is not our concern here. As the sub-title indicates, our publication is devoted to a Christian interpretation of human problems. What we have attempted here is not a discussion of the politics of Kerala from the press-man's chair or the politician's, but an appraisal of it from the Christian point of view. Our attempt, we have to confess at the very outset, has not been a complete success for more reasons than one.

It might be helpful to take a glance at the contents of this issue before going thoroughly through them. In *'Towards a Theology of Politics'* the writer tries to give a succinct view of the role of politics in the Christian life. In *The Christian and the Call to Revolution* Rev. Fr Kappen descants on the attitude the Christian should take towards the revolutionary socio-political movements of the day. Mr Sebastian's article *The Socio-Political Problem of Kerala* is an expert analysis by a scrupulous observer who has been in Kerala politics for long and has studied and written profusely on the subject. Rev. Fr Puthumana seeks to make a Christian evaluation of Kerala politics in his article of that title. In *The Involvement of the Kerala Church in Politics*, Rev. Fr Antony, who

is a scholar and political philosopher, surveys the stand the Christian Churches have taken towards the political problems of our state.

It hasn't at all been possible for us here to make a thorough estimate of the part played hitherto by the Christians and the Christian Churches in Kerala politics. It has always been the Christian's duty to interpret the divine purpose behind political developments. He has been called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. He certainly has his part to play in preparing the world for its transformation into "the new heaven and the new earth." Christianity in Kerala has been progressing down the centuries but without any deep sense of this mission. Setting aside the past, however, many have been looking forward to a great awakening in the Christian community of Kerala through the new sociological studies and teaching of the Church. Their expectations, however, have not been fulfilled. Isn't it a plain fact that the Christians here have not been sufficiently active in the struggles and labours undertaken to bring about social justice and economic equality? The staunch believers here of a Church that has issued social encyclicals have not striven, to the extent to which they should, for equal opportunities in education and for the equitable distribution of land. Is the Portuguese proverb quoted by Claudel true of us, that God is writing straight by crooked strokes? Can it be that Jehovah is using politicians from among the Gentiles to teach Israel wisdom? Theological formation until recently has hitherto been of service not in spurring the Christians of the coast to action, but in making them timid, slothful and conservative. It will be a happy day for our land

when our Christian clergy and laity wake up to these facts.

Politics can be a powerful instrument for humanizing people. The depths and heights of Kerala politics for the past many years point to the depths and heights of humanity in our parts. At present it is rapidly approaching its nadir. Won't the Christians of our state do something quickly to rescue it from the wilderness of degradation and neglected values? It is an important duty of theology today to answer these questions and many others too.

Towards a Theology of Politics

Explanations

WE have sought in this issue to assess broadly, from the Christian point of view, the particular socio-political problem of a particular territory. It is evident that such an assessment has to be made in the light of certain values and principles, which are inseparable from a Christian outlook on life. We are attempting here to look at political problems and facts in the light of Christian theology in order that our findings might be of help in other similar assessments. No particular problem in politics has been taken up for study here, but attention is focused on some general facets of political life and activity from the point of view of theology.

Before touching on the vital aspects of the subject some definitions and elucidations appear necessary. Being a theological analysis of Politics this is not a political discussion, but a theological one. Theology is human reflection on Christian truths and mysteries¹. What these truths and mysteries are, what are the methods, peculiarities and deliberations, etc., are outside the scope of this article. There have been scientific reflections on the doctrines of faith in the Church right from its inception. Theologians of modern times have been attempting an estimate of the different aspects of human life and activities with eyes of faith "functioning actively in thinking

men"². With regard to the various kinds of activities in man's social life (apart from the religious and spiritual) theological insights are possible and necessary. Theological reflection on occupations, entertainments, education, family life, economic enterprises, art, literature and the like, are instances in point. This branch is commonly known as the Theology of Terrestrial Things. Politics has a major place in man's mundane activities. In other words the life of man in the present epoch is undergoing more politicalization than in any other. Hence theological reflections on this subject are not irrelevant. What is more, the appearance of a fresh shoot of Theology—Political Theology—adds to the importance of this topic.

Our clarifications do not end here. What is politics? It is difficult to give a definition of politics in an age when everything is becoming political³. Carl Schmitt's statement that 'politics is something with no circumscribable zone, objective or subjective' is partly correct⁴. Nor are the definitions of the text-books (written by political philosophers) of any substantial help, for many of them define politics as "the scientific study of the state"⁵. The word "politics" has of course this meaning too. We may, if we want, paraphrase it as "political science". But by the term "politics" we mean a broader area. The origin of the state, its characteristics, the kinds of government, etc., are subjects of discussion for the political scientist. But he need not necessarily be a politician. It is possible to expound the characteristics of the state by a phenomenological analysis, but that would make this article intolerably long and therefore will not be attempted. However, a very short example may be cited. The Hindu hermits are

no politicians, and cows do not interfere in matters of politics even in India. But the demonstration staged in Delhi against cow-slaughter a few years ago by thousands of sanyasis was something political. It was found necessary to adopt a political approach, this being a public cause bound up with the religious sentiments of hundreds of thousands of Hindus. The sadhus wanted to exert pressure on the government not as hermits but as citizens of India. Dozens of similar instances may be recalled.

We use the word 'politics' in a broader sense here, giving it the meaning of 'political life.' Like religious life, spiritual life, social life etc., political life too is a subject for deliberation. To live means to be engaged in certain activities, and the politician engages in certain special activities. As members of the state all men are citizens. Our participation as citizens in the conduct of the state is what we mean by political life⁶. The state is a special kind of society and all societies need to be controlled by regulations. Political regulation is called political government. The term 'political government' is adopted here since governments of one kind or another (e.g. in the family and the Church) are found in all kinds of societies. In the management of the state all do not participate equally. The citizens of a democratic state take part in political life by casting their votes on certain special occasions. But we can't treat all the citizens of a state as politicians solely for the reason that they are all voters. Political activities take certain forms that are more practical, conscious, direct, unbroken and concrete than others. Activities through political parties, organizations of public opinion, membership of the legislative assemblies, power politics (pressure politics) etc., are some of them. The endeavours of

those citizens who are destined to take an active part in the government of the state for the public good (in the ways just indicated) are what we mean by 'politics.' To put this in technical language, "all efforts for the building of the terrestrial city" may be termed 'politics.' It is by living in the earthly Jerusalem that we are to attain to the future heavenly one. Every one has the responsibility of making the "terrestrial city" habitable to man.

An essential requisite for the government of the state is power. In the ultimate analysis political power may even be found to rest on a monopoly of physical force⁷. (There is no implication here, however, that the use of force is the sole foundation of political power.) Hence, the sociological observation which is at least partly acceptable that the efforts made towards the appropriation or division of political power, or towards influencing a parcelling out of that power form the chief element of politics.⁸ The definition of politics as given earlier was purely a philosophical one. Theologians give greater weight to philosophical insights than to sociological conclusions, and this again seems acceptable.

Only a narrow aspect of a vast and comprehensive subject, with many complexities in it, is discussed here. 'The Relation between the Spiritual and the Temporal' is the vast subject: when narrowed down it shrinks to the relation between the world and religion. 'Religion and Politics', 'The Church and the State', 'Institutional Religions and Politics', 'The Church and Politics', 'The Catholic Church and Politics', 'Catholics and Politics', 'The Clergy and Politics', 'Political Theology', etc., are different divisions and branches of our subject. It is intended here only to discuss, in the light of theology, what import-

ance Christians should give to political life and activities. There is further the intention to put in a nutshell the political theology of the Metz School that stridently calls on the Catholic Church to take up a political mission too.

Metz, Barth, Bonhoeffer

The political scientist gets practically nothing from the pages of the Bible, nor are the Evangelists, for their part, interested in the discussions of political bodies. On the other hand references are very many in Holy Writ to political authority. Chapter XIII of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans is only too well-known. He observes that all authority (not excepting the state's) proceeds from God. In the Greek original, for 'authority' he uses 'exousia'. The meaning the Greeks gave to the word 'exousia' was 'the right to add to, or take away from, at will'⁹. The usage is highly pertinent both to ancient and modern states. Politics has a reasonable share in making man human.¹⁰ The capabilities that states possess (and modern states in particular) of making man human or otherwise are exceedingly important. The democratic states have been striving to this very day for an enrichment of the humanity in man. But we should not forget the power the totalitarian states possess to stamp out the humanity in him. One of the weightiest reasons for the presence of the Christian in the sphere of politics is that Christianity has a challenging role to play in making man human.

But the disposition of Machiavelli was not Christian at all when he sang the praises of the citizens of Florence who toiled more for the glory of their maternal city rather than for the salvation of their souls.¹¹ In the hierarchy of values Christians should

give the spiritual and the temporal ones only such places as they deserve. On the other hand, there is no concurring with those who maintain that politics is an indispensable medium through which salvation is attained¹². Let us, however, consider it in the light of the Christian view of life. The principles of Christian morality being both binding and sound in politics as well, Christians have to serve actively in the field of politics. Their service and their co-operation with others should certainly be impelled by charity. But these conclusions do not qualify politics for a place in theology. Hence, Hans Maier's dictum, "politics has no theological status"¹³ is quite acceptable. The same theologian goes on to say that it is not politics that decides the ultimate end and meaning of life, that it is bound up directly with the temporalization of the world and that Christians should never be worshippers of the world but enrichers and refiners of it.

If this stand is fundamentally sound (and it is sound in the opinion of the present writer), the political theology¹⁴ of Catholic theologians like Metz and others and the Christological politics of Bonhoeffer¹⁵, Karl Barth¹⁶ and others have serious defects. Metz remarks that practical and political considerations should guide the deliberation of theologians and that Christ's mission aimed at a multiple emancipation - social, political and historical¹⁷. There is no difficulty in admitting that Christian faith and teachings ought to be practical, valid and vibrant in socio-political spheres. But the thesis that the chief mission of the Christian faith is either political or social gets no support either from the Founder of Christianity, or from the apostles, the fathers of the Church and the majority of modern theologians.

Christianity has neither a concrete political theory nor a programme. The call to conversion, to the rejection of the 'old man' and the putting on of the new, to seeking first the Kingdom of God etc., does not involve political missions, directly or chiefly. Socio-political activities may arise in responding to these calls¹⁸. On the other hand the contention that the salvation preached by Jesus is only individualistic and private cannot stand. In this epoch when our notion of the people of God and of the social implications of spiritual life are stronger than ever, the individualistic notions of salvation of some theologians do not appear reasonable.

It is not possible here to discuss at length the approaches of Barth, Bonhoeffer and others. Karl Barth who holds that the state is a divine institution, that it is under Christ's monarchy, and that the state has a part to play in man's redemption does not recognize an apolitical Christianity. He goes further, tells us how to serve God politically and finds no difficulty in quoting St. Paul and others in support of his stand. He admits that it is diametrically opposed to that of Luther, the founder of Protestantism. Be that as it may, Catholic theology does not lend support, generally speaking, to these ideas. That the entire created universe is under Christ's sovereignty, and that in the end it will be unified in him are truths which all Christians accept. But these Christological insights alone are insufficient by themselves for understanding political institutions in their specificity and nature. We are related to politics first and foremost not as Christians but as citizens. We have of necessity to recognize the state's autonomy, its particular arrangements for the realization of temporal objectives, etc. The

deliberations of Barth and Bonhoeffer on politics may be rather valid with respect to a thoroughly Christian state. But with regard to the modern states which are either secular or irreligious their relevance is questionable¹⁹. Anyway, Max Weber's observation that the salvation of the soul is not to be sought through politics appears commendable even today²⁰.

Political Authority

It is incumbent on those that point out the loopholes in political theology and Christological theology to clarify what the stand of Christians should be, regarding political power. Here again we can't ignore Chapter XIII of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. St. Paul teaches unambiguously that all power proceeds from God and therefore we are bound in conscience to obey political authorities. Now what is the importance of this idea of Paul's in a theological deliberation on politics? No Catholic theologian has ever dared to call in question Paul's view of political authority. To catch what Paul means one has to understand the sociological background of the Pauline outlook. He was a Jew. The socio-political set-up of the Jews was theocracy. It was an order where political and religious powers got bound up together in a tangle. Israel is Jehovah's kingdom. The Jews were governed by the high priest and the assembly of the sanhedrim. The priestly power was divine, and religious too²¹. But to take such a stand towards today's political authorities would be absurd. Modern states, as a rule, are all secular. It would only be proper to take a secular stand in the matter of their power-structure. It may broadly be stated that the created universe, with all the principalities and powers in it

are from God. But to understand the specificity of political power this is not enough. Obedience and submission to authority have been an important aspect of the teachings of the Catholic Church all along. The Church's own interests have helped this stand a good deal. But is it in the same sense that political authority is derived from God, namely in the sense that all the authority of the Church for teaching and governing is from God? Is a Catholic's obligation to obey Mrs. Gandhi or Mao, the same as his obligation to obey Pope Paul? Certainly not. What is worse, it is getting difficult for us even to get on as citizens today without calling in question the authority of many of the present-day governments. The state in the strictest sense is never a divine institution. Its laws, rules and regulations are man-made. Our obligation to obey it is based on the common good.

Hence, the doctrine that all authority is from God is true only in a very broad sense. A philosophical justification of it may be given too if one is very particular. It is in this sense that Roger Mehl, the Protestant thinker, observes that authority is from God, since all values are included in a hierarchy of values, the highest of which is the living God Himself²².

What is Politics for?

So much has been said here neither to decry the importance of politics nor to imply that the Christian has to keep out of it. We have of course to attack the stand some have taken that politics is the all-important element in a Christian's life. But even the relative values—values that are never all-important—have their own places in our lives. The higher values

are built upon a basis of lower ones, and these in turn depend on others on the lower rungs. This is the case with politics. The ultimate aims of Christian life are not political. But we have to reach our final fulfilment through political and economic structures. Our earthly life is beset with multifarious needs. The state helps us in meeting many of these temporal needs. This is the meaning of the statement that the end of the state is the satisfaction of needs and not perfection²³. The needs here signify temporal needs.

We have seen that politics is a device that helps humanization considerably. It is improper to insist that the Christian should not cultivate his humanity. Today even the Christian monastic orders all the world over have begun to incorporate in themselves the cardinal principles of Christian humanism. The more our humanity develops the greater its support and shelter to Christianity. But to the majority of the people now on earth such opportunities of self-cultivation and self-development are being denied. Food, shelter, clothing, education, work,—all these are man's fundamental needs. The majority of the people in undeveloped countries find it hard to meet their primary needs even today. Besides these there are their needs as citizens. The freedom to choose the mode of governments which should rule over them, freedom of opinion, faith, culture etc., are the rights of every individual as a citizen. They are devices that humanize the modern man, and are to be secured largely through political efforts. The development of the humanity of man, the delivering of him from enslaving alienations, etc., are therefore the objectives of all political endeavours today²⁴. Christians too, like the others, have their duty to engage in the creative and conscious activities

calculated to realize these objectives. In a sense it is the Christian that has this duty to a greater measure, for the command in the law of charity is very peremptory. In the projects and efforts for socio-political emancipation Christians participate not only as individuals but also as members of a church. The revolutionary steps that the World Council of Churches has taken recently are but some of the instances in point. Mention has to be made here particularly of the efforts towards progress priests and laity have been making against the obscurantist regimes in South America.

The Vatican Council's attitude towards the political activities of Christians can be learned from its documents. They are not quoted here at any length. It is enough for us to remind ourselves that the Christian's spiritual and religious ends are also his human ends²⁵. His ultimate end is not the terrestrial city, but the heavenly one. It is this noble end that should give him the impulse and the inspiration to make his material city more habitable. This ultimate aim imparts favourable meaning and content to human history from now on, not mechanically but through Christian activities inspired by neighbourly love²⁶.

Violence and Christians

But a confounding problem poses itself here. The sphere of politics is no sphere of the immaculate love of one's fellow-men. Aggression, violence, self interest, rivalry, are all active here. Christianity never stands by violence. That is why Camus has pointed out that Christianity has never aided any of the revolutions of the world. Merleau-Ponty has stated that the politician's lot is the miserable one of translating

values into facts. If the Church's stand against violence is an uncompromising 'No', the Christian on active service in the field of politics cannot be contented with that 'No' alone. It is not possible here to discuss at any length the stands Helder Camaral and Camillo Torres have taken. The theological deliberations on aggression and revolution are still lost in a cloud of vagueness. Helder Camaral referred once to his sympathy for the Christian's resorting to violence in unavoidable circumstances. It is the Christian conscience shaped by the Christian teachings that is to have the last word in the matter. We must try to understand the grounds on which violent action bases itself without supporting it

Some Suggestions

No further evidence or reason need be given as regards the need for Christians to be on active service in the field of politics. But by what principles they are to stand fast, and what things are expected of them, have also to be pointed out. Albert Dondeyne prescribes four imperatives in his famous book on the Christian faith functioning in the heart of the world²⁷. These should govern the Christian's political commitment. The very first is that his political enterprises should never be based solely on faith or devotion. A study of social and historical backgrounds, scientific instructions, political consciousness, creative imagination, etc., should essentially qualify his political loyalties

Politicians have to chalk out their schemes with the awareness that politics is first and foremost a programme of work directed towards the well-being of man. Recalling this will be especially good for those who labour under the delusion that politics is

only a technique or social engineering to handle properties. The concrete structures and institutions in the state and society ought in the end to reflect our respect and consideration for man. The Christian should not stand by any political ventures whatsoever that have no respect for truth, love, liberty, justice, etc.

The third imperative is a bit confusing. But it is an important one to the Christian believing in his Church and religion. It is well known that politics has a powerful influence on the faith, traditions, rituals and religious institutions of the Christian. Nations are accustomed to interfere in the affairs of the Church in one form or another. On such occasions (when politics touches the altar) Christian politicians have to discharge their duties with daring and discretion. They have to work in such fields with the conviction that freedom of conscience and worship are not exclusive to their own religion or Church.

The fourth and the last principle pertains to the political ideals of the Christian. Every one will endorse the fact that there are certain ideals that control man's activities. But these ends and ideals are related to concrete and changing circumstances. In the Church-State relation it is not the Renaissance ideal that prevails today. It would be mere political buffoonery to hold high the medieval concept of the Christian state. Politicians who try to restore the guild system and corporatism of the Middle Ages in economic relations today would only make themselves butts of ridicule. The Christian politicians will do well to remember these truths.

Democracy and Christianity

Having said so much on the subject, something has necessarily to be said now about the relation

between democracy and Christianity. It has often been pointed out that Christianity has never shown any preferential affinity to a particular kind of regime. But then Maritain, Barth and others hold that the meaning, essence, inspiration and foundation of democracy are all of evangelical origin. Neither the Church nor the Christian can adopt an indifferent attitude to certain particular socio-political activities. Let the Vatican Council be our guide here. It says that the Church and the Christians are to try incessantly to learn and interpret the signs of the times in the light of the Gospels²⁸. The question whether parliamentary democracy, socialistic democracy or presidential government is most acceptable to us has to be answered in the light of ever so many concrete situations. But one thing should not be forgotten. The foundations of democracy, to be sure, are certain insights inseparably bound-up with the ultimate end of human life²⁹. Will it be possible for the Christians of today to maintain a nonchalant attitude to a form of government that embodies in it these insights of liberty, equality, fraternity, etc.? There is then the reverse of the medal. In a political regime where religion and God are forgotten, there will be no place for liberty or fraternity. Where there is no God there is no man. What Dostoevsky has put into the mouth of Karamazov is nothing different. If God is not, then everything is permissible. It will be good for the anti-religious democrats to remember this truth.

Politics within the Church

What has been said hitherto applies to the Christian engaged in the field of politics. But it will be improper in this connection not to refer at least briefly to some political activities within the Church. I deal only with the Catholic Church. Pope Pius

xii had already proclaimed that public opinion to a limited extent has a place in the Catholic Church. This public opinion is growing and gathering momentum today, e.g., opinions are diverse among the faithful in the matter of encyclicals like "*Humanae Vitae*," the workings of the Vatican, the mode of Church government, etc. We can't forget that the Vatican has also become a powerful element in world politics³⁰. The clergy and the laity interested in the Church are more concerned today than ever with the common affairs affecting the members of the Church. The internationalisation of the Vatican Curia, the Italian monopoly in church government, the reforms to be introduced in the nuncio system and hosts of other topics are all being discussed at great length. The hierarchy has to recognise the right and the responsibility the faithful have to continue their activities in this direction and to ventilate their views on it. The faithful in their turn should remember that here again there are certain limitations to their rights and liberties as in all other fields.

Conclusion

It is through a stormy, complex and turbulent world that Christians with a political bent are sailing along with others. There isn't much political guidance available to the Christian politician from the Sermon on the Mount or the writings of the fathers of the Church. Nor is it the duty of the church authorities to give definite instructions from time to time to the faithful engaged in political work. The stand and the responsibilities of the Christian serving in the field of politics are highly muddled. He may find it necessary to interpret the

hints in the Gospels and the encyclicals in the light of his own conscience. Nor is it possible today for any Christian with a full-fledged Christian conscience to evade this heavy responsibility. Is it possible for him to flee from the world he lives in? Nor has he been given, as in other spheres, any royal road or golden keys for his political activities. Yet he will never shun—and he mustn't shun—trials if need be, side by side with a sticking fast to principles. He should not let the notion run away with him, that politics is a zone of the eternal. It is imperative that constitutions, pacts, charters and treaties and modes of government should go on changing. So far as Christian politicians are concerned, stagnation, dogmatism, conservatism and a predilection for the past will be the political heresies of tomorrow, as they are today. The descendants of those Catholic scholars, who were paid by the old Sorbonne to attack anything new coming up, may be found among today's Catholic politicians as well. We should have the nerve to face and embrace the uncertainties that circumscribe us. We should be helped in this by the Christian eschatological hope. If Christian politicians do so they can easily become a supplement of soul to the body politic of the day. Indeed the modern polity badly needs this healing and wholesome presence of the Christian in it to help it fulfil its essential role in the on-going process of the humanisation of man and the secularisation of the world.

1 Theology is Christian faith in human reflection. Schillebeeckx, *Concept of Truth*, Sheed and Ward, page 79

2 It is faith alive in a thinking mind. Ibid.

3 Even the recruitment of Kerala girls to European convents has become a political problem

4 Carl Schmitt: *Begriff des Politischen*

5 Politics is the science of the state. Dabin: *L'Etat*.
page 15

6 Dondeyne: *La Foi Ecoute le Monde* - page 254

7 This monopoly of force may be obtained either through revolution or through law.

8 *From Max Weber*: By Gerth and Mills - page 78

9 William Barclay: *Gospel of St. Mathew* Vol. I. page 131

10 "Politics is a process of humanisation." Lehmann, p.2

11 *From Max Weber* - page 126

12 Salvation is here taken in its religious and spiritual sense.

13 Hans Maier: *Stimmen der Zeit* - February 1969
page 73-91

14 Metz: *Zur Theologie der Welt*

15 Bonhoeffer: *Ethics* - page 332-53

16 H. Bouillard: *Karl Barth* - Vol. III. page 263-83

17 Metz: *Concilium* - June 1968

18 Bockenforde: *Stim. der Zeit*-December, 1969
page 365

19 Bouillard: *Op. cit* - page 273-276

20 Weber: *Op. cit.* - page 125

21 Neher: *L'Essence du Prophétisme* - page 227

22 R. Mehel: *De l'Autorité des Valeurs*. Chapter one

23 *Etudes Philosophique* - April 1970 - page 167-77

24 *Politique et Technique* (Symposium), Paris

25 *Concilium* - June 1968 - page 12

26 *Ibid* - page 13

27 Dondeyne - *Op. cit* - Chapter nine

28 Past. Const. Article 4

29 *Christianisme et Liberté* Paris - Page 145-146

30 Bernhart: *Der Vatican als Weltmacht*, Munich

The Christian and the Call to Revolution *

I INTRODUCTION

1. The Problem

THE Christian is today confronted with many challenges of which the most pressing, especially in economically developing countries, is the one posed by revolution. He lives in an atmosphere charged with revolutionary élan. He sees all around popular movements aimed at the eradication of economic and social inequality, at the demolition of socio-economic structures embodying the tyranny of the privileged few over the underprivileged many. In this situation he feels the irresistible urge to participate in such movements. For he knows well enough that justice is on their side, and that they hold the key to the future. But, for the average Christian, to throw in his lot with the forces of revolution would look like betrayal of his faith, of his loyalty to Christ. For the faith he imbibed from early childhood has instilled in him an instinctive reverence for order, peace and security. He has been taught to see the will of God in existing social evils and to submit himself to them in a spirit of resignation. Besides, he asks: what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? He therefore concludes that his faith demands of him non-participation in, if not opposition to, revolutionary movements. He has thus to choose between his loyalty to Christ and

loyalty to the cause of the oppressed masses. Confronted with this anguishing choice, many believers opt for revolution, sacrificing in the process their allegiance to Christ and his Church. Others withdraw into the privacy of their Christian existence or take refuge in bourgeois conformism. Still a third group lives in a state of permanent spiritual conflict with the resulting loss of creativity. Is this polarization a necessary consequence of the Gospel? Is it possible for a Christian to commit himself to revolutionary action, not in spite of, but because of his faith in Christ? What follows is a tentative attempt to solve this problem.

2. The Approach

Revolution, understood as the rapid and radical transformation of an existing social system (as a system of structures and values) into a more humane one, is one of the modes of social change whereby humanity strives to move forward to a fuller realization of its possibilities, and, as such, is one of the modes of development. Hence it is in the broader framework of human development that we should conduct our enquiry into the Christian meaning of revolution. Development may be defined as the humanization of man through the humanization of 'nature.' By 'nature' we mean not only the material world but also the socio-cultural conditions of life as given at any particular point of history. Today the process of development implies something more than the fact that changes are taking place *in* the world. It means above all that the world itself is moving forward, and that too at a vertiginous speed. This new existential situation has thrown up also new questions. Formerly when man lived in a relatively static world, he could afford to

stand still with his eyes focused on an equally immovable firmament, all lost in contemplation. His question then was: Whence came I? How shall I return to my original home? Today, with man reduced to the condition of a pilgrim, the all important question is: Where are we moving to? For in the final analysis it is the point of arrival of the collective march of mankind that can give meaning, content and orientation to man's historical decisions here and now. This question regarding the unknown Ahead has to be answered in the light not only of reason but also of faith. How does faith envisage the end of all human development?

II THE KINGDOM AS THE FUTURE OF MAN

It is no use looking in the Bible for a detailed description of the end-result of history. The end remains shrouded in mystery. Yet we do find in the Bible a veiled vision of the ultimate fulfilment. We have a prophetic, symbolic description of it in the Book of Revelations: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had vanished, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice proclaiming from the throne. 'Now at last God has his dwelling among men! He will dwell among them and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes; there shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain, for the old order has passed away!'" (Rev. 21:1-4).

The end-fulfilment of history is pictured here in terms of a universal reconciliation—the reconciliation

of man with God, with other men, and with the world of things. The Kingdom is above all the togetherness of man and God, the indwelling of man in God, and of God in man. But, for God to take man into his heart is to make him fully human, in other words, it is to personalize him. This ultimate flowering of the human is at the same time the liberation of man from every form of human alienation—from sin and the ambivalence of freedom, from suffering and death. The personalization of man, however, should not be conceived in purely individualistic terms. For God in personalizing him also socializes him. In as much as all men begin to live from the same personal centre of infinite love, they begin to exist in and for one another. In other words they become a people, God's people. This means the definitive overcoming of all social alienation, of all class-antagonisms. The Kingdom 'as the home of justice' (2 P. 3:13) is the realization of a 'classless society', in which all men will be equal without ceasing to be different, one without being uniform, in which personal existence will encompass and be encompassed by the life of the community. The new community brought into being by God will not be one of disincarnate souls. On earth man enters into communion with other men and with God only through the mediation of his body and of other material things, whether originally given or produced by him. This mediation will not be suppressed in the Kingdom. Rather it will reach its supreme sublimation. The "new heaven and the new earth" is the universe "freed from the shackles of mortality" and endowed with "the liberty and the splendour of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). The world of things will be then the perfect medium of expression of the love that binds

man and God into one theandric community. Man will then possess things without their becoming 'mine' or 'thine'. The end of all human development will transcend both collectivism and individualism, and usher in the true socialism of being and having.

III THE KINGDOM AS ALREADY PRESENT

The eschatological Kingdom is something radically and totally new: "Behold! I am making all things *new*" (Rev. 21:5). However, it comes into being not by annihilating but by renewing the old: "I am making *all things* new." More, this renewal is already at work at the heart of history. The Christ-event marks the inbreak of the Kingdom into this world. "The time has come; the kingdom of God is upon you; repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk.1:15). The God-related, communitarian, and cosmic dimensions of the Kingdom are realized in the life and message of Jesus. The life of Jesus was one of abiding communion with the Father: "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee" (Jn. 17:21). In dying and rising from the dead he passed over from the realm of the 'already' into the realm of the 'not yet.' He did so carrying humanity in his heart. Here is the basis of our hope that the human pilgrimage will come to a successful issue. All men, in so far as they are open to the invitation of truth, are already sharing in Christ's togetherness with the Father, in his passing over into the newness of the risen life.

The Christ-event inserted into the world also a new principle of human togetherness, namely, love—a love that gives itself ("For this is my blood..... shed for many for the forgiveness of sins". Mt.26:28)

even to the point of self-emptying unto death (Ph. 2:8). This love is not a weak well-wishing that can coexist easily with any social system however unjust. It is a dynamic force, one would say, a subversive element, planted in the centre of history. For by an inner logic it tends to justice. If to love is to give, the first gift one can bestow on one's neighbour is to recognize his unique value as person with inviolable rights. The justice inherent in love seeks to create equality: "At the moment your surplus meets their need, but one day your need may be met from their surplus. The aim is equality" (2 Co. 8: 14). This is the reason why the message of Jesus is really good news to the poor: "Blessed are the poor" (Lk. 6: 20). The poor here means not merely the pious and the humble but also, and above all, that class of people who are deprived of the goods of this world, are bent under the weight of oppression and exploitation, and have none to defend their cause¹. To them the Messiah comes as one who routs the arrogant of heart, pulls down princes from their thrones, exalts the lowly, fills the hungry with good things, and sends away the rich empty-handed (Lk. 1:51-53). Though the salvation brought by Jesus is essentially religious, it has implications also for the economic and social liberation of man, since the law of love he proclaimed and sealed with his own blood cannot coexist with discrimination against any particular class, and can be truly 'at home' only in a society in which there is "no such thing as Jew or Greek, slave and freeman, male and female" (Ga. 3:28). The love that Jesus inserted into the course of history is now silently at work overcoming the powers of hatred and demolishing the structures that divide man from man. Seen in this light all

social movements which have for their aim the promotion of justice, equality and brotherhood, are ways in which the Kingdom of God realizes itself here on earth.

The Christ-event means also the insertion of the Kingdom into the world of matter. The word in becoming flesh became one with the cosmos. He took the material world into his heart, and gave it the possibility of sharing his own destiny of dying and rising from the dead. Through his death and resurrection he made matter the 'sacrament' of man's love for God and his fellowmen. In him and through him the material world including the products of human activity have become radically reconciled to God (Col. 1:20). The Kingdom is therefore growing in the womb of the universe which now "groans in all its parts as if in the pangs of childbirth" (Rom. 8:22). The 'new heaven and the new earth' is germinally present in our earth and in our heaven.

IV THE KINGDOM AS AN ETHICAL TASK

The Kingdom both in its end-fulfilment and in its germinal presence is the gift of God, "the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God" from whom comes every perfect gift (Jn. 1:17). However, the sheer gratuity of this gift does not make it any less the fruit of the action of man, since God's gift takes the form of man's free decision and action. The Kingdom as it grows in history is the result not only of the action of God who calls from the unknown Ahead but also of the trembling response of man to the same call. In other words, it is dialogal in its very nature. Its dialogal character is finally rooted in the dialogal structure of the very being of

the God-Man. In Jesus Christ God's saving Word and man's response fuse into one to form but one personal existence. As was his being, so too was his earthly life essentially a dialogue with the Father, a truth that stands out clearly in his death: "The Father loves me because I lay down my life, to receive it back again. No one has robbed me of it, I am laying it down *of my own free will*. This *charge* I have received from my Father" (Jn. 10:18). What is true of Christ is true also of the Kingdom as it emerges in history. It demands man's response, his personal decision here and now. Hence the urgency of the call: "The Kingdom of God is upon you, *repent and believe* in the Gospel" (Mk: 1:15). The Kingdom, therefore, grows not alongside but in and through the course of history as shaped by man. The history of salvation and 'profane' history do not run along parallel lines. They form but two dimensions of the same reality.

The realization of the Kingdom is therefore also an ethical task, a 'charge' that man has received from the Father. What then is the content of this ethical task? The Kingdom demands from man, first of all, spiritual conversion, a change of heart so that his spiritual forces become centred on God rather than on his own self. This conversion is not something that is accomplished once for all. It unfolds itself in the form of one's individual history in response to the ever renewed invitations of God. To march forward not knowing fully where one is going to, to have to choose between the many paths that lie ahead, not to be able to settle down anywhere for good—that is the destiny of the man who has turned to God once and for all. Fanatical conservatism, therefore, stands at the opposite pole of the spiritual revolution demanded by the Kingdom.

In the past Christians tended to interpret the metanoia demanded by the Kingdom almost exclusively in individualistic and spiritualistic terms, without taking into consideration the social and corporeal dimension of man. Man is social and corporeal not only in what he is here and now but also in what he is called to be in the eschatological Kingdom. Hence to be converted to God implies to be committed to the reign of absolute love, justice and peace beyond history and to the reign of ever greater love, justice and peace here on earth. It demands commitment to a constant renewal of society so that the latter conforms more and more to the eschatological Kingdom. Before the demands of the Kingdom in its absolute fulfilment every existing social order assumes a provisional character. To absolutize it by refusing to go beyond it is a sin against our hope in the Kingdom that is 'to come' and against our faith in the Kingdom that is now emerging. Conversion requires also a new relationship to the world of things. Negatively, the believer must see to it that he does not become a slave to the machine and its products, to the world of his creation. Positively, he must strive to make the production, exchange and use of goods subservient to the growth of universal love and fellowship in society.

The Christian, in virtue of his very faith in the Kingdom, is put in a situation of dialectical tension between *commitment* to concrete secular goals economic, social, and political and *criticism* of all social systems whether existing or yet to be realized. He has to commit himself to concrete goals, since there is no other way to make the existing social order harmonize with the end-fulfilment of history. He has to be critical of every social goal and system lest he

should make them absolute, and thereby 'freeze' mankind's march to the Kingdom at one cross-section of time. His faith in the kingdom that is already emerging calls for commitment; his hope in the Kingdom that is yet to come calls for criticism and detachment. Both commitment and criticism have to be safeguarded. Commitment without criticism breeds fanaticism, intolerance and utopianism; criticism without commitment empties Christian life of any meaningful content here and now. However, commitment and criticism are not two separate functions. They are immanent in each other. Hence the Christian attitude to all human development may be described as critical commitment or committed criticism.

V REVOLUTION FOR THE SAKE OF THE KINGDOM

Social criticism may have to take a revolutionary form in certain conditions. Such conditions exist in economically developing countries like India, where there have been wide-spread and long-standing injustice and inequality, and where the masses have become painfully conscious of their subhuman conditions of life, of their right to a life worthy of man. These conditions are in violent contradiction to the requirements of the Kingdom, and call for a rapid and radical reshaping of the social order. In such conditions the Christian is inspired by his faith not only to co-operate with already existing revolutionary movements but also to initiate them. He is urged on by his hope to translate his criticism into practice, into concrete programmes of subversion directed against the existing social order. Like the prophets of old, he is "set over nations and kingdoms, to tear up and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow,

to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). In fulfilling this task he is not alone. For God is at work in history awakening the conscience of men and calling them to a richer and fuller being. Hence the Christian who co-operates with all men of good will in the reconstruction of society is in fact co-operating with the Spirit of God that makes all things new. However, faithfulness to the logic of the Kingdom demands that he criticizes also the revolution to which he is committed. For revolutionary movements may harbour factors like vested interests and class hatred which betray their own cause and foredoom them to failure. Revolutionary criticism and action divorced from self-criticism may usher in a social order which is nothing more than an inverse copy of the one it replaces, in which the oppressor and the oppressed of today will only have exchanged their places.

An existing social order is overthrown in view of building up another one more in harmony with the demands of justice. To achieve this it is necessary to project into the future a model to be realized. Here the Gospel can give the believer only a general orientation. For, if it is relatively easy to determine what is at variance with the Kingdom, it is in most cases impossible to derive from the Gospel any concrete model of society to be realized here and now. There may be many possible 'projects' which are equally in harmony with the requirements of the Kingdom. Or it might happen that the ideal project is not practicable in existing conditions. Here the Christian is thrown back on his own resources. He has to enter into dialogue with other citizens, and make use of the data provided by the secular sciences like economics, sociology, political science, etc. Besides, the compatibility of more than one project

with the Gospel obliges him to respect pluralism of opinion and action among believers as well as unbelievers. Like any other citizen, the Christian too shares the human condition of having to take leaps into the unknown future at the risk of failure. It follows from this that where there is a question of building up the future, faith can provide him nothing more than an eschatological horizon of hope that acts as a source of motivation and as a negative criterion for the choice of projects.

In his commitment to the revolutionary reconstruction of society the Christian should beware of identifying earthly progress with the growth of the Kingdom. For the new social structures and institutions he brings into existence are delivered up to the judgement of sinful man, to the ambivalence of his freedom, and to the judgement of the living God. They can be used by other men either for or against God, either as an instrument of love or as an instrument of hatred. Besides, what man creates is subject to the redeeming fire of God who judges both in history and at the summing up of history. The Christian, therefore, has no guarantee that all that he helps in creating will be gathered up into the Kingdom. Yet he knows that *something* of what he creates will *somehow* be gathered into the "home of justice" (2 P. 3:13) by God who has reconciled and is reconciling the universe to himself in Jesus Christ.

VI REVOLUTION UNDER THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

What maintains any existing social order is power, secular or religious. Hence no social order can be radically transformed without breaking the power-structure inherent in it. Now power can be broken only through power. Can the Christian use any kind

of power including physical violence to overthrow unjust social systems? The answer, it seems to us, must be sought in Jesus Christ, who not only is the Kingdom but also the Way leading to it. The mission he received from the Father was in a sense revolutionary. He came to bring down the walls that Jewish formalism had built between man and man, and between man and God, and to lead Judaism and humanity back to the very source of true religion, namely, the personal decision of man in favour of total self-giving to God in his fellowmen, which is made possible by the gracious, redeeming initiative of God himself. In other words, he came to insert into the world love as the fundamental principle of secular as well as religious life. In accomplishing this task he had to face the opposition of a twofold power-structure: the socio-religious power of official Judaism, and, indirectly, the political power of the Roman Empire. In such a situation the temptation to follow the way of violence would have been quite natural. For in Jesus' life-time there was already the extremist movement of the Zealots, who hoped to overthrow Roman supremacy and restore the old theocratic state through armed rebellion. It is also likely that among the disciples, besides Simon the Zealot, Judas Iscariot and Peter who originally belonged to the Zealot group, there were also others who nursed the hope that their master would declare himself a political Messiah and take up arms against Rome². Yet Jesus rejected both political Messianism and the use of violence. His rejection of violence seems to be unconditional, for he says: "...all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt. 36:52). The path he chose was one of non-violence: "Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the

other also" (Mt. 5:39). He rejected violence because it is the child of hatred which is diametrically opposed to the love that seeks to redeem all including one's enemies. The Kingdom cannot be brought into being through a principle that denies it.

However, the refusal of Jesus to resort to violence does not mean that his attitude to evil was one of passive acquiescence or abject capitulation. What he rejected was not resistance but violent resistance. He did resist evil, and that too passionately. His bold and incisive criticism of the hollowness of the Jewish religious formalism ("you hypocrites," "you vipers' brood" Mt. 23:33), and of secular authority ("Go and tell that fox" Lk. 13:32) proves the tenacity with which he held on to truth. It was his determined 'no' to evil that cost him his life. He sealed his resistance with his own blood. He replaced the weakness of violence—for all violence is an expression of weakness—with the power of suffering. He thus made the cross the weapon of all revolution and the ultimate guarantee of its success.

The Christian therefore has to apply the methodology of the cross to his revolutionary commitment. Eschewing all hatred, he must hold on to truth and organize collective resistance to unjust structures and institutions so that these cannot any longer continue in existence. In this he will find an inviolable guide in Gandhi who was the first to transform the power of love unto death into a weapon for socio-political revolution. He was also the first to show that collective non-violent resistance is capable of overcoming even well-organized military power. The effectiveness of 'satyagraha' (which means precisely 'holding on to truth') contrasted with violence consists in this: that while the latter can bring about

change only in objective structures of society and not in the hearts of the opponents, the former is better calculated to achieve both. Finally, it was Gandhi who interpreted for the modern man the 'political' power of the Cross. He was convinced that "nations like individuals, could only be made through the agony of the Cross"³.

VII CLEARING UP A DIFFICULTY

We have tried thus far to draw out the revolutionary implications of our hope in the Kingdom. But the Christian revolutionary who looks to the Jesus of the Gospel for inspiration is confronted with a certain disconcerting ambivalence in some of his words and attitudes regarding the social problems of his day. On the one hand, Jesus places himself on the side of the revolutionaries with his message of love as the mainspring of religious and secular life, with his criticism of the rich, of the merciless, and of those who pervert the law of God, with his refusal to be a conformist as is shown by his dealings with the Samaritans, with women, with sinners and publicans. On the other hand, he manifests a certain indifference to the affairs of this world. For instance, he refuses to identify himself with the political hopes of the Zealots, or to get involved in settling disputes over property rights: "My good man, who set me over you to judge or arbitrate?" (Lk. 12:14). He seems to take for granted the unjust social practices of his time, not excepting slavery (Lk. 17:7-10; Mk. 10:42ff). How to explain this ambivalence? A detailed treatment of the problem is beyond the scope of this essay. We shall do no more than briefly indicate the principle that should guide our search for a solution.

The solution should, it seems to us, be sought in the dialogal structure of the being and life of Jesus to which we referred earlier. Jesus is, above all, God's saving Word to man. Now the redemptive initiative of God made visible in and through him does not annul the autonomy of man as constituted by the creative initiative of the same God. Jesus came into the world not to take over the work of creation proper to man, but to lead it to its eschatological fulfilment. In other words, his mission was to save man, and not to create a new social order. He did not come to open a short cut to the "new heaven and the new earth" by dispensing man from the anguish of creating his own history. The transcendence of his salvific mission demanded of him that he did not identify himself with concrete socio-political programmes like that of the Zealots. The relevance of his mission for the reconstruction of the earthly city is only indirect (i.e. requiring the mediation of human freedom) in so far as he gave man a new faith, a new love and a new hope, without which his commitment to the creation of a better world would be deprived of ultimate meaning and value.

The ambivalence in question must be interpreted also in the light of the fact that Jesus, God's saving Word to man, is at the same time humanity's 'yes' to the same Word. And as such he shared the human condition. He appeared on earth at a particular stage of history, and had the limitations of his age, of his culture. His being invested with a universal mission does not make him any less the product of his environment. Hence we would not be taking his humanity seriously if we were to expect him to pose *our* problems and propose *our* solutions. The concrete actions and reactions of Jesus need not necessarily

be the norm for our actions today. What we must do is to assimilate the core of his message and the spirit that governed his life, and reinterpret them in the light of our contemporary situation. The ethical imperative of critical participation in social revolution, which we have derived from Jesus' central message of the Kingdom, is the fruit of one such reinterpretation. In a sense, therefore, we are called upon to do greater things than he did, though this 'greater' will always fall short of what he was and what he did, since in him alone was realized the plenitude of divinity and humanity.

* This essay is to be read more as a meditation on the Gospel than as a systematic theological treatise. Hence the paucity of references. However, the author claims no originality, and gladly recognizes his indebtedness to contemporary theological writings.

1) For an understanding of the social relevance of the Beatitudes, see Jacques Dupont, *Les Beatitudes*, Tome II, Paris 1969, pp. 65-90

2) Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament*, London, 1963, pp. 12-42.

3) M. K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, ed. Anand T. Hingorani, Bombay, 1963, p. 68.

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The Socio-Political Problem of Kerala

THE tiny state of Kerala situated at the southern tip of India is often described as a problem for the whole of India.

Lakhs of young educated people are now wandering aimlessly in Kerala. There are no possibilities for them in the near future to find employment. The existing industries have only limited scope for absorbing more employees and new industries are shy to start.

Even if the educated unemployed turn to the land for employment they will find little available for occupation. Kerala is deficit in employment opportunities as it is in the production of food, and lack of food intensifies the need for employment.

This vicious circle has brought Kerala to the edge of an explosive situation. After Bengal the largest number of acts of Naxalite terrorism is taking place in Kerala. A distinguished correspondent in his appraisal of the Kerala situation recently wrote in his paper, "Every unemployed educated youth in Kerala is a potential naxalite."

Kerala was formed by the merger of Malabar district formerly of Madras State with the princely States of Travancore and Cochin. In 1949 the princely States of Travancore and Cochin were united to form the single State of Travancore and Cochin. The present State of Kerala was formed in 1957 on the basis of a linguistic reorganisation of States.

Long before India won independence, the peasants, the tenants, the "kudikidappukars" (=hutment dwellers) and agricultural workers had been agitating for land and for a better social order in Travancore, Cochin, and in the Malabar regions of the State. The insurrection in 1947 at Vayalar-Punnappa (Alleppy district) which has been described as the first revolution in Kerala was inspired by the offer of 13.5 cents of land for each of the landless people, if the revolution succeeded. The revolutionaries who fought with wooden spears and batons against the guns of the army, were naturally crushed. Much earlier than this an agrarian revolt occurred in Malabar, but the wealthy proprietors were able to suppress the revolt.

After 24 years of relentless struggle, the landless people of Kerala (hutment dwellers) have now become owners of 10 cents of land each. The principle of tenancy has been abolished. Legally, at any rate, landlordism has come to an end in Kerala.

Some of the provisions of the Land Reforms Act have been struck down by the judiciary. But the judiciary has not completely denied the rights of the tenants and the hutment dwellers to the land they are entitled to hold. If these rights are denied to them, they may rise against the constitution and the courts. The system in which a few fortunate people possessed all the land has undergone a change. Even the plantations may be split up in this process of distribution of land to the landless people. Before long, the principle that land like water and air are for equal enjoyment of all the people, may come to be established in Kerala. Kerala has already advanced beyond other States in

India in the matter of land reform. This is due to the pressure of all the political parties for radical reforms in the agricultural sector. Minimum wages have been fixed for agricultural workers. It has been proposed to set up agricultural courts to determine the service conditions, working hours and fair wages for workers. Provident fund, old age pension and other benefits are also being thought of now.

The agricultural workers are, by and large, free from exploitation in Kerala, apart from the overall situation of unemployment and under-employment and economic backwardness of the State as a whole. In certain pockets of the State there may still be difficulties for the agricultural workers. In the forests of Wynad the landlords may still employ contract labour (which some people describe as slave labour), but such restrictions may disappear sooner or later. In the larger context of fights for economic benefits, the agricultural workers, who were exploited in the past, perhaps have not paid too high a price for their present gains. To a certain extent, they have won their rights as cheaply as India won its independence.

The position of the industrial workers of Kerala is also more or less secure. They also have won their security through prolonged struggles. They maintain a better standard of life than the white collar employees. They now enjoy insurance, provident fund, gratuity, and bonuses. With their occasional lock-outs and strikes the industrial workers enjoy a large measure of security. The real danger developing in Kerala is the problem of unemployment. More than a million of people are now roaming about without any hope of employment. In

addition to them another 2 million people are estimated to be under-employed. Thousands of engineers, doctors, and other technically qualified young men are without work now. Export of educated young men was a major line of business for Kerala. But today such opportunities have ended.

Inside Kerala, as we have seen, job opportunities are scarce. Of the total revenue of Rs. 137 crores more than Rs. 87 crores (more than 60 per cent) are now being spent to maintain the government services. Sixty per cent of the revenue of the state is paid out to just three lakhs of government employees. This minority belonging to the establishment is now clamouring for more benefits. They are unlikely to be satisfied even if the state spent all its revenue on them. Capital investment for relieving unemployment is difficult to find, and therefore Kerala is becoming an ideal hunting-ground for movements like naxalism. Short-sighted rulers have brought Kerala to this pass.

There is corruption and favouritism in employment. When opportunities are rare and the demand is great, it is natural that there should be abundant scope for corruption. There is also the possibility that those who are denied employment may get frustrated. Their frustration may grow to the point of explosion.

And now for the political scene. The first election in former Travancore State was held soon after the communist insurrection at Vayallar-Punnappara. In that election not a single communist could win despite the fact that the Congress, the leading party, in the state put up even candidates described as men of straw. The first communist member who enter-

ed the state legislature of Travancore-Cochin was Mr. E. Gopalakrishna Menon, who found a place there by virtue of his membership of the Cochin assembly before integration.

In 1954, for the first time in its history, the Congress lost its overall majority in the Travancore-Cochin legislature. A series of internal squabbles and group formations damaged the image of the Congress even in the first general election of 1952. This helped Mr. Pattam A. Thanu Pillai who had left the Congress leadership for the Praja Socialist Party to form a minority government in 1954, with the "responsive co-operation" of the Congress which sat in the opposition. The Congress pulled down the P.S.P. ministry after 11 months perhaps because, the Congress would not either rule well or allow other parties to rule.

After the fall of the P. S. P. ministry the Congress was able to form a ministry of its own by encouraging defection from the P. S. P. Thus, the Congress in Kerala under the leadership of the late Mr. Panampally Govinda Menon first sowed the seeds of defection long before attempting this in other states.

With the reorganisation of states it was a common belief that the communist party would exercise a dominant position because it had a strong base in the Malabar region which was merged with Travancore-Cochin to form the new Kerala State. Also the Kanniakumari district, a part of Travancore, where the Congress enjoyed a superior position, was merged with Tamil Nadu.

What was feared did actually happen in the general election in 1957. The Communist Party of India

won the majority of seats and formed the first communist ministry in India with the support of 5 independent members. The ministry had the distinction of being the first of its kind to come to power through the ballot box. Mr. E. M. S. Namboodripad became the Chief Minister.

Mr. Joseph Mundasserry who complained of being "victimised" as a teacher by a private college became the education minister in the Namboodripad cabinet. He started to wreak vengeance on the private sector by introducing the Kerala Education Bill and the Kerala University Bill both of which sought to restrict the freedom of the private sector in education. The revenue minister Mrs. K. R. Gouri, a dedicated communist, introduced the Agrarian Relations Bill.

The combined opposition of the Congress, the P.S.P. and the Muslim League offered strong resistance to the ministry. Mr. Pattam A. Thanu Pillai and Mr. P. T. Chacko of the Congress, two renowned politicians led the opposition which had only two votes fewer than the ruling Communist party. The Congress at the centre, at that time, was not as weak as it is today. Therefore, the opposition especially the Congress, had a very influential position in Kerala.

The reforms which the government sought to introduce in the educational and agricultural sectors disturbed vested interests. They raised a voice of dissent. The Church joined the forces opposing educational reform. The opposition which wanted any stick to beat the Communist ministry joined the agitation against the Education Bill sponsored by the Church. There was no lack of funds for the agitation. What began as a minor protest developed by 1959 into a mass movement for the dismissal of the Communist ministry.

The Congress leader in the opposition Mr. P. T. Chacko, was a farsighted politician. He realised the need for a democratic front to fight the communists. The strategy of "isolate and annihilate the communists" was successfully employed by Mr. P.T. Chacko to push them out of power.

The Congress had a weakness. They could not form an alliance with the Muslim League, but Mr. P. T. Chacko was able to keep it on his side in the "Liberation struggle", and also in the 1960 mid-term poll which followed the dismissal of the CPI ministry. After the poll in which the CPI was routed Mr. Chacko was able to persuade the Muslim League to keep out of the Ministry and be satisfied with the speakership of the legislature. (K. M. Seethi Sahib of the Muslim League was elected speaker.) His death created a problem which the Congress solved by persuading the Muslim League to put up its leader Mr. C. H. Mohammed Koya as an independent candidate for the speakership. Mr. Koya had to resign the membership of the League to become the speaker. Subsequently Mr. Koya resigned as speaker and rejoined the Muslim League as a protest against the anti-Muslim-League tirade of the organisational wing of the Congress. The Muslim League thus crossed over to the opposition and began an era of political fraternisation with the CPI.

The Congress was, at that time, a partner in the coalition led by the P. S. P. Chief Minister Mr. Pattam Thanu Pillai. The PSP was a small party. The Congress did not relish the idea of working under the leadership of a PSP Chief Minister. So it contrived with Central Government to send away Mr. Pattam Thanu Pillai as governor of Punjab.

The PSP protested and walked out of the coalition leaving the Congress to rule the State as a single party.

During the Congress rule Mr. P. T. Chacko who handled the revenue portfolio brought forward the Land Reforms Bill to replace the Agrarian Relations Act which had been passed by the previous communist government. He not only got the bill passed by the legislature but also managed to include it in the ninth schedule of the Constitution which protected it from challenge in the court. The Congress was then in a strong position although the Muslim League and the PSP had broken away from their alliance with it.

Law and order which had been set at naught during the communist regime were restored. Anti-corruption steps were taken and progressive land legislation was passed. What is more the CPI which strongly opposed it was split in 1964. But the Congress was unable to use all these favourable developments to its political advantage. The anti-Chacko group in the Congress exploited a minor car incident involving Mr. Chacko to oust him from the Congress ministry. He died subsequently with a broken heart. The only Congress-man who faced up to the communists politically was thus lost to Kerala.

His death coincided with a split in the State Congress. 15 Congress members of the legislature led by Mr. K. M. George revolted against the leadership of Mr. R. Sankar, the Chief Minister who was accused of betraying Mr. Chacko. The rebels joined the opposition to pull down the Sankar Ministry as a form of political retaliation for the alleged betrayal.

In the 1965 mid-term poll the Congress and the rebel Congress (Kerala Congress) fought each other. So did the two Communist parties, the CPI and CPI (Marxist). The CPI opposed the CPI (M) decision to have an understanding with the Muslim League, which it described as a communal organisation. The Muslim League forged an alliance with the Kerala Congress and also entered into an understanding with the CPI (M), in respect of five constituencies in the Malabar region. The Muslim League—Kerala Congress alliance was not of much help to either party, but it gave the Muslim League certain amount of political respectability which was all that it wanted then.

The election did not give any single party a majority. The CPI(M) made an offer of its support to a ministry of the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League, but this was rejected. The Congress refused either to support a Kerala Congress—Muslim League ministry or to form a ministry of its own supported by the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League. The legislature was dissolved before it was convened because no party was in a position to form a ministry.

The next election was in 1967. The Congress and the Kerala Congress fought each other. But the two communist parties, learning a lesson from the 1965 poll, formed a united front against the Congress. The Muslim League joined the united front. The Marxist-led united front won a large majority of the 133 seats in the State Assembly. The Congress could win only 9 seats and the Kerala Congress 5. The rest went to the united front. It is interesting to note that in this election the strategy used by Mr. Chacko to “isolate and annihilate” the undivided

CPI was employed by Mr. E. M. S. Namboodripad to defeat both the Congress and the Kerala Congress. The united front ministry which came to power on the basis of a minimum programme did not however survive long. There were squabbles from the very beginning. After 31 months the ministry fell. Two alternatives were left to Kerala: an immediate mid-term poll or an alternative ministry. An alternate ministry under the leadership of the CPI and including the Kerala Congress was formed with the unconditional support of the Congress which was later split into two. The CPI-led ministry had the support of all parties except the CPI (M), Samyuktha Socialist Party, Karshaka Thozhili Party and Kerala Socialist Party. Mr. C. Atchutha Menon, the chief minister, began to rule with a mass of public good will for the ministry. It restored law and order. It sent out from the road transport corporation all the employees illegally recruited during the Marxist regime. Appointments to the road transport corporation were left to be made by the public service commission. Land reform was launched as a mass movement with the willing consent of the land owners and the land-seekers, on the basis of the Land Reform Act. All these activities raised the hope and enthusiasm of the people.

But even such a government was unable to continue. The old wing of the Congress as distinct from the new wing formed after the split throughout India, began to take a hostile attitude to the ministry. Exploiting this situation the CPI (M) tried to encourage defection from the ruling front in order to topple the ministry. But it did not succeed because of popular pressure which brought back the defectors to the ruling front.

Unfortunately the ISP (Indian Socialist Party) which was a partner of the ruling united front faced an internal crisis. A faction of the ISP broke away from it and rejoined the PSP. The continued support of the ISP to the ministry became doubtful. If Mr. Atchutha Menon was defeated there was every possibility of an alternative ministry taking its place with the support of the CPI (M). Such a ministry might have undone whatever good measures the 9-month-old Menon Ministry did for Kerala.

Taking this possibility into consideration, Mr. Atchutha Menon dramatically announced the dissolution of the legislature. Counting on support from the majority of the people he called for a mid-term poll. At the time his government had only a nominal majority in the house.

Mr. Atchutha Menon promised that the ruling front would continue its alliance in fighting the mid-term election. But a month before the poll on September 17, 1970 the Kerala Congress left the united front. It was forced to fight the election almost alone although formally the Congress (O) was its ally. The Congress (O) did not get any appreciable support.

The CPI, Muslim League, PSP (Praja Socialist Party) and RSP (Revolutionary Socialist Party) were the parties still in the Atchutha Menon front, and the Congress (N) reached an electoral understanding with it. Together they won 69 seats and the Atchutha Menon front returned to power with the support of the Congress (N). The Marxist-led united front comprising the SSP, ISP, KSP, and KTP won 46 seats. The Kerala Congress won 14 seats. The Congress (O) although all its official candidates were

defeated, was able to form a group of its own in the legislature with 4 independent members who were returned to the assembly with its support but these independents were backed by the Marxists too.

One thing is clear from this picture: there is no likelihood of a single party's coming to power in Kerala in the near future. Only the parties which stand for law and order are likely to come to the top. Those who fail to respect popular sentiment will go down.

Another fact also cannot be ignored: the CPI (M) is a political force in Kerala. The CPI entirely depends on other parties for its survival. A democratic alliance of non-communist parties, can always defeat both the communist parties, but the non-communists are unable to agree on a common programme.

As a party the Kerala Congress which declared equi-distance from all communist parties as its guiding policy has been forced to go along with the CPI (M), which leads the opposition, on at least some of the issues coming up in the legislature. The Kerala Congress which refused to regard the CPI as a lesser evil than the CPI (M) has now to rub shoulder with the more dangerous CPI (M). Anti-communism has been the sheet-anchor of the Kerala Congress, which owes its origin and growth to this policy.

For nine months, after November 1969, the Kerala Congress shared power with the CPI. No one criticised the Kerala Congress for joining the coalition led by the CPI. A large section of the people has only sweet memories of the nine-month coalition regime. The separation of the Kerala Congress from

the CPI-led united front in the mid-term poll was a major factor in creating the present situation in which the CPI-led coalition has to depend entirely on the Congress (N) for survival.

The association of the Kerala Congress with the CPI-led administration did not give rise to much confusion in the minds of the democratic section of the people. On the other hand a section of the people did not refuse its support to Kerala Congress even when it decided, at the last minute, to leave the CPI-led united front and contest the mid-term poll practically alone.

If the Kerala Congress too had joined the Congress (N) and the CPI united front in the election, the strength of the CPI (M) in the present legislature would have been much smaller than what it is now.

On the eve of the mid-term poll a controversy developed on the attitude of the Kerala Congress to the two communist parties. It was started by the very same people who blessed the Kerala Congress when it joined the CPI-led administration. They now wanted the Kerala Congress to declare "untouchability" towards both the communist parties and join a non-communist democratic front. But it was common knowledge that a non-communist democratic front including Congress (N), Congress (O), Muslim League, PSP and the Swathantra Party was an unpractical proposition. Even then the sponsors of the democratic front did not change their stand.

It was thus that the mid-term poll was conducted with the CPI front and the Congress (N) on the one side, and the CPI (M) united front on the other, and with the Kerala Congress and Congress (O) forming

a democratic front between them. Although the two communist—led united fronts sought to defeat each other, the result of the poll showed that the CPI (M) fought more against the Kerala Congress than against the CPI. In Kottarakkara and in Palai the Marxists party openly voted for the Congress (N) candidates who were supported by the CPI united front.

If the Kerala Congress had chosen to continue in the CPI united front, the strength of the two communist parties would have been considerably reduced in Kerala. The Kerala Congress strength would have gone up to at least 18 instead of being 14 as it is now. The Congress (N) too would have won more seats. The increase in the strength of the Kerala Congress and the Congress (N) would have been at the expense of the two communist parties.

In such a situation the democratic content in the coalition would have gained a dominating position even if Mr. Atchutha Menon (CPI) was allowed to become the chief minister, but that is beside the point here.

The CPI (M) supported the candidate of the Kerala Congress at the election of the speaker in the house. This was not surprising. It was a natural corollary of the role of the opposition. They voted together during the vote on the governor's address to the legislature. It was quite a normal practice. Then came the attack on the alleged police excesses against students. The opposition joined together to attack the government.

In the by-election to the Rajya Sabha the Kerala Congress maintained its independence and did not vote, and that was a correct stance. It would be

wrong for any political party to remain neutral on all issues coming up before the legislature.

The position is very clear today. The Kerala Congress and the CPI (M) may often have to work together in opposition. Those who went out of the CPI front to fight communism are now finding themselves in the helpless position of having to wait at the door of the Marxists.

Trivandrum

K. C. Sebastian

The Involvement of the Kerala Church in Politics

THE involvement of the Kerala Church in politics may be described as the belated attempts of a community with a medieval outlook to catch up with the demands of modern times.

Kerala has been famous in ecclesiastical history as the home of a Christian community tracing its origin from apostolic times and proud of having preserved the deposits of faith substantially intact throughout the last twenty centuries. People testify to the vigour and vitality of this community by pointing out that it has one of the highest records of religious vocations in the Catholic Church. At the same time Kerala has recently hit the headlines by the fact that it is the only country in the world that has indulged in the dangerous political game of voting communists into power twice in a decade, and pushing them out by methods constitutional and otherwise. Christians form 20% of about 20 million people in Kerala. Of the Christians two-thirds are Catholics.

Formation of Kerala

For an evaluation of the part played by the Church in the politics of this people, a brief historical survey will be useful. Kerala became a single political unit, a constituent state of the Indian Union, only in 1956, as a result of what is known as the reorganization of the states of the Indian

Republic on a linguistic basis. For a long time prior to this date, the southern part of present-day Kerala was ruled over by the Maharaja of Travancore, and the central part by the Maharaja of Cochin. The northern part known as 'British Malabar', formed part of Madras State. In 1949, two years after India became independent, Travancore and Cochin were integrated into the united State of Travancore-Cochin. This process of integration was completed with the addition of Malabar in 1956 to form present-day Kerala.

Christians formed 32% of the population of former Travancore-Cochin, whereas the present percentage of Christians in Kerala is only 20. This is because in British Malabar the Christian community was only a small minority. The present Christian population of Malabar consists mostly of emigrants from Travancore-Cochin.

Travancore-Cochin

The history of the involvement of the Church in Kerala, prior to 1956, is thus confined to Travancore-Cochin, particularly to Travancore. The governments of both these states were monarchical and authoritarian, but under the control of the foreign British imperial power. The government of the Church was similarly traditional and authoritarian. The Latin Catholics were still ruled over mostly by foreign prelates. The Syrians had come under the rule of Bishops of their own community only a few decades earlier. The Catholic community, generally engaged in agriculture and trade, and denied the chances of higher education, had very few political aspirations and opportunities.

But conditions began to change as schools and colleges became established, and educated young men came to realize that the opportunities for entry into government services, which their fellow-citizens enjoyed, were closed to them. In this period we see the beginnings of organized efforts by the lay-leaders of the community for the removal of civic and religious disabilities. Christians were ineligible for government service and there were restrictions on the establishment of churches and cemeteries. The All-Kerala Catholic Congress, the main organization of the Catholics of Kerala for their involvement in the socio-political activities of nearly half a century, had its origin in this period. The Bishops generally gave patronage and encouragement to the activities of the A. K. C. C.

Such, in bare outline, was the political condition of the Catholic community prior to 1930. But with the accession of Maharaja Sri. Chithira Thirunal to the throne of Travancore in 1932 and the appointment of Sir. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer as his political adviser, and later on as Dewan, conditions began to change rapidly.

C. P. Era

Certain legislative reforms, introduced by 'Sir C. P.' benefited the caste Hindus but discriminated against the Christians, Muslims and non-caste Hindus like the Izhavas. This marked the beginning of an agitation for political rights by these under-privileged sections. The Christians were in the forefront of the agitation. It was called the Abstention Movement because the Christians, Muslims and Izhavas decided to abstain from participation in the elections to the

legislature. The agitation was very successful in focusing public attention on the discrimination and political injustice underlying the reforms. However, astute politician as he was, 'Sir C. P.' succeeded in causing divisions among the agitators by arrests, threats and, when found useful, rewards. This weakened the movement for some time.

But as the political grievances of the people remained unredressed, the agitation took a new form in 1938. An organization known as the Travancore State Congress, brought within its ambit all the important communities of the state and aimed at the establishment of constitutional government. 'Sir C. P.' unleashed repressive measures against the leaders, many of whom had to languish in prison for long periods.

It was at this time that the "Shastybhipurthi" (60th birthday) of 'Sir C. P.' was celebrated. It was a period in which the ecclesiastical leaders of the Catholic community were put to much hardship by the calculated policy of the government which denied them permission to open schools and to establish churches and places of burial. These were all the more urgently needed, for it was also the period of the Reunion Movement under the leadership of Archbishop Mar Ivanios. Most of the leaders of the political agitation were in prison and there was a stalemate. 'Sir C. P.' began negotiations with the bishops and succeeded at last in winning from them a big demonstration of support in his favour on his 60th birthday in return for certain much-needed reliefs and concessions to the Catholic community. He gave a brilliant address on the occasion and managed to have it broadcast over the Vatican Radio. It contained the highest tributes to the Catholic Church,—

empty words of a politician. Needless to say, this caused much chagrin to the political leaders of the community.

'Sir C. P.' continued his political experiments and adventures in Travancore. To fore-stall the popular demands for responsible government he introduced certain political reforms with universal adult suffrage, but with an irremovable executive. This scheme to perpetuate the office of the Dewan and the rule of the bureaucracy was euphemistically described as democracy on the American model.

The 'School' Question

Next he launched a scheme for taking over all the primary schools run by private agencies in the state. The Christians, especially the Catholics, were responsible for running a large number of them. Bishop Mar James Kalassery of Changanacherry issued a strongly-worded pastoral letter against the Government move and called upon the people to rise up in defence of their schools. 'Sir C. P.' had thus to face a two-pronged opposition, from the people as a whole against his 'American model' and from the Catholics against his takeover of schools. He assumed military powers and mercilessly crushed a violent agitation started by the communists. But the Bishop of Changanacherry was too strong for him. The Bishop had the strong backing of the whole Catholic community, and many sections of the backward classes also gave their support to him because he dared to stand up to the autocratic Dewan. The resistance of the Christian community to the Government take-over of the schools was a splendid example of the united stand of the prelates and people for a legitimate common cause.

But in the long run 'Sir C. P.' stole a march on the Christian community. What kind of diplomatic wire-pulling he resorted to is not known to the people. He declared himself ready to negotiate as the head of the government with the Bishops, who were spiritual rulers of their community. A *modus vivendi* was arrived at between the government and the bishops regarding the running of the schools. But it was a deal over the heads of the lay-leaders, who had suffered and sacrificed so much for the cause. No wonder, they felt bitterly that they had been let down a second time on a crucial point.

Independence

When the British finally decided to leave India, 'Sir C. P.' made a last bid to cling on to power by declaring Travancore an independent state with the lapse of the British paramountcy. However, following an attempt on his life by an unknown person during a public function in Trivandrum he quit Travancore in 1947.

In the wake of Indian independence and in response to the continuous agitation of the people, popular governments with universal adult suffrage were established in Travancore and Cochin in 1948. It is but fair to mention here that, thanks to the benevolence of their Maharajas, the people of Cochin were spared the terrible ordeal endured by the people of Travancore in the progress to political freedom. In 1949 the two states were integrated into the United State of Travancore-Cochin.

Party Politics

Looking back on the twenty years of democratic rule in Kerala one feels disillusioned and disappo-

inted inspite of certain economic and social gains. National and democratic government has belied the expectations of the common people who form the bulk of the community. The measure of this disillusionment may be gauged by the fact that within nine years of winning independence and democracy the people voted a communist government into power.

Two radically opposed tendencies have contributed to this sad state of affairs. One is that the wealthy and the influential classes, into whose hands came the reins of the government in the post-independent period wished only to replace princely rule by a government for their own benefit. They wished to perpetuate their feudal, sectarian and class interests under the form of democratic rule. The other was that, on account of the intensive propaganda carried on by the communists, the working class had become highly class-conscious and violent. Between these two political groups were a large mass of middle class people who, though enthusiastic about their newly-won freedom and democracy, were most inarticulate and untutored in practical politics.

Catholics in the Mainstream

In the years of agitation against the autocratic rule of 'Sir C. P.' and in the struggle for independence, Catholics had joined the mainstream of socio-political life in the state. Consequently when popular governments were established several Catholics were elected to the legislatures and to the top ranks of the Congress organization, which was in power. It has to be admitted that, but with few exceptions, in their socio-political outlook they were not

different from the leaders of other communities. The Christian contribution did not substantially help to clear the turbid waters of the political mainstream.

The first decade of Congress rule was characterised by intrigues, partisan rivalries, communal jealousies, the formation, reshuffling and toppling down of short-lived cabinets, and frequent elections. Catholics too had their share in this dirty game of politics. To complicate matters for the Catholic community, this was also the period in which a secret anti-Catholic lobby was working in New Delhi under the inspiration of communal forces in Kerala. The compulsory demotion of two Catholic judges of the High Court and the innumerable difficulties placed in the way of the poor peasant cultivators in the High Ranges were instances of what this anti-Catholic lobby could do.

Vested Interests Galore

In earlier years the lay-leaders had complained that the bishops had completely ignored them and had negotiated over their heads with the rulers and representatives of the government. But after 1950 the poor man began to feel more and more that his interests were not safe in the hands of the lay leaders, who had achieved power and influence in the new political set-up. The social doctrine of the Gospel as expounded in the papal encyclicals, found little place in their thinking. The greatest scandal of the period was that the Church lost the support of the working classes and the spread of communism bore witness to an unfulfilled task of Christianity. The negative mentality of the Congress leaders only enabled the Communists to louden their war-cry,

with the result that they won the next election and came to power in 1957.

Liberation Unfulfilled

The excesses of the Communists, however, turned the people against them and resulted in a Liberation Struggle. The Catholic community spearheaded the agitation, and threw themselves into it with all their might and main. In the popular upsurge the Communists were forced to withdraw from the government. Elections were held the following year, and the grand alliance of democratic forces consisting of the Congress, the PSP and the Muslim League, won as many as 94 seats, compared with the 30 seats won by the Communists and their allies. But once the elections were over the reactionary and communal forces within the Congress party asserted themselves and decided to keep the Muslims out of the government. Catholic opinion within the Congress under the leadership of that illustrious champion of democracy, the late Mr. P. T. Chacko, was strongly in favour of giving a fair deal to the Muslim League. But Congress chauvinism prevailed, with what disastrous consequences the subsequent history of Kerala politics has proved. The Muslims, declared political untouchables by the Congress, were befriended by the Marxists who exploited this friendship to come to power again in 1967 through the ballot box.

The Congress-P. S. P. coalition government formed in 1960 missed all opportunities of promoting social justice, economic freedom, and much-needed land reform. Any demand for social justice, was branded as promotion of Communism. The flag of Catholic Church herself could not be raised in defence of the poor, even though, as everybody knows, the teach-

ings of the Church are on their side. The very discussion of such social questions in the Catholic press was frowned upon by some of the authorities. The tragic situation was aptly described by a Catholic journalist, who publicly wrote, in a by—line article, that in Kerala the very expression 'formation of public opinion in the Catholic press' sounded strange. This only shows how out of tune with Catholic thinking on social questions was the leadership of the community.

Catholic leadership, whether represented by the diocese or religious congregations, vied with one another in attracting funds from generous sources and adding to the already impressive number of educational, charitable and other institutions. The growth of institutionalism was even greater than the growth of institutions themselves. The all important social question was by-passed.

Political Wisdom Dawning

The leaders of the Congress party, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, were confident that whatever their performance be, as long as the Communist menace was there, they could count upon Catholic votes, by pressurising the bishops to issue pastoral letters in their favour. They resorted to this game with varying degrees of success up to the election of 1967, which again brought the Communists to power as already mentioned. The 1967 elections seem to be the last one in which directions were issued to the Catholic voters by some of the bishops to vote for the Congress. The political consciousness gradually gained by the middle class during the last decade succeeded in 1970 in removing the Marxists from power.

New Frontiers

Kerala even now remains a problem state. The Marxist Party still retains its hold on over 25% of the voters. The democrats are plagued with internecine rivalries. Political parties seem to function on the principle of the madness of the many for the benefit of the few. The spirit of indiscipline let loose in the schools and colleges, and abetted by some teachers and politicians poses the greatest problem for the future.

If the Church is to fulfil her duty of witnessing to Christ in this post-conciliar period, a great amount of rethinking by prelate, priest and layman together with enlightened leaders of other communities is necessary. A theology of development, a new form of politics penetrated with religion as the basic and ultimate concern has to be evolved, and evolved without delay.

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A Christian Evaluation of Kerala Politics

THE political situation in Kerala is puzzling in many ways. Considering the nature of democracy Kerala should be the best soil for it in India. It has a higher literacy-rate and a greater degree of political consciousness than any other state in the Country. In reality, however, Kerala is one of the most turbulent states where democracy is faced with serious threats. It has never had the good fortune to enjoy the benefits of a stable Government. And in spite of being the state having the highest christian concentration and the longest christian tradition in India, it is a well-known stronghold of communism which still continues to strengthen its position despite the apparent setback in the recent elections. Evidently it is not an easy task to analyse and assess this extremely complicated situation. However an attempt has to be made if only because of the fact that, as the political spearhead of India, Kerala can reveal the direction towards which the nation as a whole is moving.

I

We shall begin our analysis with an inquiry into the fundamental reason for the chronic disturbances which have become part and parcel of the socio-political life of Kerala. The endless strikes and bundhs, the organized land-grab movement and the Naxalite atrocities are but a few striking examples. What is immediately apparent is a crisis of law and order created by the subversive activities of the

various brands of communists and their sympathizers. However on closer examination it would appear that the crisis of law and order is but a by-product of a deeper problem, a problem created by a positive factor in the development of society.

To understand this it is necessary to take note of some important developments in contemporary history. Owing to the confluence of various factors - which need not concern us here - man today is becoming increasingly conscious of his dignity and rights. Man's awareness of his dignity is, of course, nothing new. What is new is that this awareness has penetrated or is fast penetrating through every stratum of society down to the lowest and that its practical implications have become clearer than ever before. Needless to say this is a welcome process and a Christian one too. But as far as the common man is concerned this is almost always accompanied by an awareness of himself as a victim of injustice both present and past. The result is a feeling of bitterness against the social set-up which tolerates this injustice, and in particular against those factors in the set-up which seem to perpetuate it by opposing social change. For this reason the very first external expression of this positive realization is often a negative one, a protest which, if accompanied by an awareness of numerical strength, may even turn violent. Hence the relentless struggle, by no means always peaceful, that is going on in various parts of the world against social injustice and all kinds of discrimination based on caste, colour, or creed. From a christian point of view it may be difficult to endorse this entire process as it is. But neither is it possible for the christian to reject it wholesale because "God's spirit who with a marvellous providence directs the unfolding of time and

renews the face of the earth, is not absent from this development".¹

Coming now to the situation in Kerala, we should bear in mind that educationally it is the most advanced state in India. Generally speaking, therefore we should expect the Keralites to be comparatively more conscious of themselves and their rights, more indignant when these rights are denied, and more determined to vindicate their rights against opposition. If, in this background, we review the disturbances in Kerala we shall see that they are the outcome of a rather complex process. At the deepest level is a positive factor: the growing self-awareness of the common man which is part of mankind's historic march towards self-realization. But in the given situation this awareness immediately expresses itself as a protest and an urgent call to social change. For the existing social structure, institutions and customs which are the product of a different mentality are not always capable of incorporating the newly discovered values. But the call to social change, which being a reaction is anything but balanced, immediately provokes opposition from the more privileged section of the society. Gradually tension mounts and conflict ensues. The situation is made even worse by those who support the reactionary forces and oppose change in the name of peace. For the world is irreversibly turned towards development and any attempt to arrest this by clinging to the status quo will bring not peace and order but disorder and destruction of peace.

This, however, is not the whole picture. No account of the social disorder in Kerala can be complete or even correct without reference to the communist

movement. For if conservative reaction to social change has sown the seeds of conflict in Kerala communism has watered and nurtured them to full growth. With a keen sense of history the communists perceived the tremendous significance of the awakening self, awareness of the common man, immediately allied themselves with it and marshalled it for the growth of the communist movement. They appeared on the scene as the spokesmen of the poor, and declared class struggle the only means whereby the poor could win their rights; and setting man against man and group against group, they encouraged every form of conflict to bring about polarization in society as a prelude to revolution. Hence the proliferation of strikes and bundhs (which are by no means always unjustified) and the growing tendency among some to take the law into their own hands. Naxalism is the most extreme expression of this tendency. While the communist ideology is its source of inspiration, the source of its strength is the unjust social conditions that prevail. Therefore Naxalism cannot be suppressed by force alone. Force may at most succeed in checking the symptoms for some time but the disease itself will remain unhealed and appear again with greater force in one form or another. By this I am not suggesting that we should not suppress Naxalite activities by force. I only mean that the final eradication of Naxalism will depend on our success in bringing about, in a peaceful way, the social revolution necessitated by the rising awareness of the common man, of his own dignity and rights. The same can also be said about communism in general. For the greatest ally of the communists is social injustice, and as long as bold steps are not taken to bring about radical social reforms communism will keep on growing in our soil in spite of the totalitarian nature of its ideology

which is a threat to personal liberty, and of its extra-territorial loyalties which are a danger to national independence.

II

The foregoing analysis leads to the conclusion that the political disturbances in Kerala are due to the fact that the growing self-awareness of the common man meets with conservative reactionaryism on the one hand and the communist ideology on the other. Now, disturbances are but one fact of our social life. Kerala is also notorious for its political instability. Within the 23 years of independence it has tried the strength and weakness of eleven ministries none of which could continue in power to complete the allotted term of five years. Certain factors responsible for this situation can be easily identified. The absence of a single strong political party, rivalry and splits within parties or coalitions, the unwieldy number of minor parties most of which have no *raison d'être* except the selfishness of an influential individual or a group, and the betrayal of their own party on crucial occasions by members,—these are the more obvious factors. All this goes to show the extent to which Kerala politics has been corrupted by self-seeking. Of course, it is unrealistic to suppose that self-interest will ever be altogether eliminated from politics. But if the very meaning of politics is not to be reversed individual self-interest has to be subordinated to, and wherever possible integrated with, the wider interests of the nation. But our politicians are not ready to do even this. For them politics means the exact opposite of what it ought to be. The party is no longer a means of serving the country but of drawing as much as possible from the country. The country

exists for the party and the party for the party leaders and, only to a slight extent, for its ordinary members. The loud talk we hear about the common good and the apparently progressive measures passed by the legislature are often nothing but clever devices to hide the selfishness of the politicians. In this background it is not difficult to understand why our politics has always been characterized by instability.

However, there is more to it than this. For what we see reflected in the political situation in Kerala is a fundamental weakness of Indian democracy as a whole. Democracy is not merely a question of a political set-up. Basically it is an approach to life of which the political set-up is but an expression. Similarly the democratic process involves much more than holding periodical elections. There must be responsible participation of the people at all levels and stages of government. But this will not be there unless the people as a whole has imbibed the spirit of democracy. The only solid foundation for a democratic political set-up is, therefore, a democratically oriented people.

Now we should note that democracy in India is not a natural product of the evolution of our society. It was rather abruptly introduced from without. But no abrupt change can be expected in the people's way of thinking and their approach to life. Hence although we have a democratic structure it is not yet informed by a democratic spirit. For a variety of reasons this defect was not immediately felt. First of all the momentum acquired by the freedom struggle was continuing for a time through the process of national reconstruction. Secondly the country had a band of dedicated leaders who entered the political field, impelled by a sense of mission

The people had confidence in them and did as they directed. Thus even in the absence of a democratic outlook on the part of the people, Indian democracy continued to function rather well, resting on the twin pillars of the people's devotion to their leaders and the leaders' dedication to the people.

Evidently, no democracy can continue for ever on such a frail support. For when the leadership under the corrupting influence of power deteriorates, democracy will be left without anything to hold it up, and will begin to collapse. In India this is no longer a mere possibility but an actuality. Most of our leaders who were in the fore-front of the freedom struggle have passed away, and with them, in large measure, the sense of dedicated service to the people. The leadership has deteriorated and become a means of self-aggrandizement. In this situation democracy has begun to make severe demands on the people. In the past, for the majority of the people democracy had meant casting a vote during elections. For the rest they had left it to the leaders to do what was best for them. But now they have found that they can no longer afford to remain idle if they are to get their due. So they have organized themselves, not in the democratic spirit of co-responsibility but on a communal or sectarian basis. Each organization or party represents a particular interest to which it subordinates everything else including the common good. Thus our response to the real demands of democracy has become undemocratic. This cannot but be so because although we had a democratic political set-up for over two decades the people as a whole had not yet imbibed the spirit of democracy. The confusion reigning in Kerala politics is due to this weakness of our democracy. It is the result of

having a non-democratic spirit within a democratic framework.

But it would be wrong to suppose that everything would be well with Indian democracy if only the leaders were converted. Not only the leaders but the whole people have to undergo a conversion if democracy is to take deep root in India. First of all in a democratic set-up only the people can convert the leaders. Secondly even if we had the best band of leaders, it is neither possible nor feasible to continue indefinitely entrusting our political responsibility to them. For this is tantamount to choosing to be political infants for ever, and for a people who choose to be political infants for ever democracy is meaningless and superfluous. But the only way of passing from childhood to adulthood is via adolescence which is a period of indecision and confusion. Something similar will have to take place in the development of our democracy too. Excessive reliance on the leaders will have to be replaced by inner conviction and responsible action. In other words Indian democracy will be mature only when the people of India will have made a conscious choice of a democratic way of life and will have acquired a democratic outlook. But before this happens it will have to pass through a kind of political adolescence. In Kerala Indian democracy has already entered that stage. The old foundation has crumbled. Confusion has set in. And we are called upon to build a stronger and more stable foundation.

III

From the preceding considerations it is clear that the social disorder and the political instability of Kerala are not to be considered purely negative

phenomena. The first is a distorted expression of man's growing self-awareness and the second a crisis of growth which Indian democracy is undergoing. Both are significant from a christian point of view. Both confront us with a challenge and an opportunity. For as christians we have the sacred obligation to purify and redeem these movements by infusing into them the healing and elevating power of the gospel. But meeting this challenge will be no easy task, not only because of the complexity of the problem but also because of the condition of our christian community. It will require nothing less than a thoroughgoing conversion of heart from us. History is the clearest proof of this. For although we have been participating in politics right from the time of independence we have not had any decisive influence on its development so far. Various reasons have been brought forward to explain this. It has been said that christians are a minority in Kerala, that they are disunited, that they are unwilling to accept a common leadership and so on. That there is some truth in all this nobody would deny. Disunity has certainly been a major impediment in this respect. But the question is: would we have succeeded in carrying the spirit of Christ into the political sphere even if we were united and numerically better off than we are at present? Of course this would have made us a political power to reckon with. But it is one thing to be a power and quite another to transform politics in a christian way by working "as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society."² Something more than unity and numerical strength is required for this. Hence neither our disunity nor our numerical inferiority is a sufficient explanation of our failure to be a dynamic element in the political development of Kerala.

It would be equally wrong to attribute our failure to the fact that the gospel is primarily concerned with man's salvation and not with his temporal life. For although the gospel does not provide us with any concrete programme of political action it is no less interested in man's earthly life than, let us say, Marxism which is a professedly economico-political ideology. Rather, looking at man and his life from a higher standpoint, the gospel urges the christian to commit himself to the development of mankind more radically and more intensely than Marxism does. More intensely, because, besides the humanitarian feelings which the christian shares with all other men, the gospel provides him with new motives, most of all with the awareness that in building this earth he is co-operating in God's work in answer to His call and thus serving his Lord. More radically, because, presenting before him the picture of the eschatological kingdom of absolute peace, justice and love, it enables the christian to see the relative imperfection of every given situation and makes it impossible for him to be complacent at any stage of man's development. The gospel, then, precisely because it does not provide us with any concrete political or economic programme, is a more powerful socio-political force than any ideology and hence cannot be held responsible for our failure in the political sphere.

Where, then, are we to look for an explanation? Evidently the gospel cannot work upon society in a vacuum. It can make an impact only through the lives of men who have been animated by its spirit. Thus animated and transformed, the christian cannot but reflect that spirit in every activity of his, and thus have an influence in every field he is actively engaged in. If, then, in spite of 19 centuries of

christian participation, Kerala politics have been little influenced by the christian faith, we must take a serious look at ourselves and see if this is not because our faith has ceased to be actively present in our own lives despite appearances to the contrary.

But is not such a supposition at variance with what is taking place right under our eyes—people pouring in for Sunday Masses, crowding the confessionals, lining up at the communion-rails in hundreds, and willingly (and sometimes not so willingly) contributing to the church funds? Are not these clear proofs of the vitality of our faith? Yes, if christian faith means giving one's assent to a set of propositions, and christian life the execution of a predetermined programme that has very little to do with contingent historical conditions which influence and determine man's everyday existence. But the fact is that these are not themselves the essence of faith but only symbolical expressions of our faith in the living Lord. Symbols are not always sure guides. They can sometimes lose contact with the reality they symbolize and become empty signs.

Hence the fact that the majority of christians still regularly attend religious services is no guarantee of the active presence of faith within us. This can be ascertained only on the basis of the christian quality of our life in the world. When can we say that our secular life really embodies and expresses faith? What is it that makes our secular life christian? Is it the observance of a few moral precepts as is commonly supposed? Christian faith certainly implies acceptance of moral obligations. But the converse is not always true. For one may observe all the precepts and yet be without faith. The jewish community of Christ's time is a clear example. As

it is clear from the Sermon on the Mount, the crucial test is not whether we observe certain precepts (which, of course, it is necessary to do) but in what spirit we observe them. Is the spirit in which we approach the business of day-to-day life any different from the spirit of the 'world'? Is the criterion we follow in judging men and events any different from the one which the world accepts? Is the hierarchy of values we accept in practice different from the one accepted by the rest of the world? If not there is nothing distinctively christian about our lives, and our christianity is nothing but a facade behind which the spirit of the world parades. The plain truth is that when it comes to these crucial matters it is not the spirit of the gospel but the spirit of world which guides us. Take, for example, our participation in politics. What is there distinctively christian about it? Others take part in politics to safeguard their interests. We take part to safeguard ours. Of course I am not suggesting that we should have no thought of our own interests or leave them to others to take care of. What I am suggesting is that if our own interests are not so widened as to include the good and progress of the whole man and of all men or in the words of the Council, to include "the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of all men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted"³, they cannot be considered christian and hence inspired by faith

From the foregoing considerations one thing emerges clearly: The fundamental reason why we have failed in making Christ's presence felt in the political sphere is neither the political irrelevance of the gospel, nor the numerical inferiority or disunity of the Christians but the fact that the spirit of

Christ has ceased to inform and influence our vita concerns and commitments. But how did this happen? The question has some importance because only if we know the genesis of the problem can we expect to find a solution which is radical. Evidently there is no one-word answer to this. For, the present situation is the outcome of a complex and gradual process. But all through it one fact seems to stand out clearly: the division of man's life into two compartments, secular and religious. The first result of this division was the irrelevance of religion to our secular life, the fatal misconception "that religion consists in acts of worship alone and in the discharge of certain moral obligations", and that Christians "can plunge themselves into earthly affairs in such a way as to imply that these are altogether divorced from the religious life."⁴

A second related effect of this separation was the irrelevance of our secular life to our religion, and its consequent devaluation of the former. Just as religion was understood to have nothing to say regarding secular pursuits, so too, it was assumed that secular life had no bearing on to do with man's life with God. Our religious life lost all its Christian significance. The split between the faith we profess and our daily lives and the consequent de-Christianization of both, is, therefore, the greatest misfortune that has befallen the Christian community in Kerala.

From this it follows that if our presence in the world is to be effective in a Christian way our lives must become a single whole with secular and religious dimensions of our life. For this we have first of all to correct the widespread misconception

which identifies Christian life with a collection of stereotyped religious practices. It has to be made clear beyond all possible doubt that Christianity is not just an inherited garment which one puts on for the sake of social conformity but something which so intimately touches man that there can be nothing in his life which is unaffected by it. The second Vatican Council has repeatedly declared this in its various documents, particularly in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and the Decree on the Laity. It was a deeper understanding of the meaning of Christian faith which enabled the Council to see this intimate connection between Christian faith and secular engagements. Faith, as understood by the Council, is man's living response to God who calls him in Christ. Above all it means personal commitment, "entrusting one's whole self freely to God."⁵ The heart of Christian faith is not a set of propositions but the person of the living Christ. The fundamental issue in the question of faith is, not whether or not one agrees to accept a set of propositions about God (which is not to be excluded), but whether or not one is existentially in contact with the living God and recognises His lordship over one's life in an active and unreserved self surrender. Consequently what determines the christian character of a life is whether or not it embodies and expresses this commitment.

In this perspective Christianity cannot be mistaken for a part-time job with a handsome pay in the world to come. For it engages the whole man, his whole life in all its dimensions and requires a painful process of conversion which transforms the self-centered old man into an other-centered new man. This fundamental detachment from self is an

essential pre-requisite for any genuine commitment. Hence the attitude of selfless service is at the very heart of the Christian faith, and the absence of this fundamental orientation is the surest sign of the absence of genuine faith, however much one may keep going to church and receiving the sacraments. On the other hand there can be no foundation more solid than the Christian faith for self-effacing service of one's fellowmen.

Thus, when faith is understood as commitment to the living God Christian life becomes a continuing dialogue which is very different from the routine performance of certain stereotyped religious rites. A predetermined programme of life tries to fashion the present after the manner of the past and is oblivious of the creative character of life. Dialogue, on the contrary, while being related to past events and experiences, is ever attentive to the call of the present and open to the future. The Lord has not disappeared after having given us a programme of life. He continues to live and confront us in and through the events of history and the varying circumstances of life so that no Christian can take refuge in the security of the past and thus spare himself the trouble of making responsible decisions in the face of the obscure and uncertain future. The Christian has to live the present, vitally related to life in the process of making it and be open to the future in the shaping of which Christ may, at any moment, call him to participate in an unpredictable way.

Hence secular life, for the christian, is an expression of his commitment to God. Far from being religiously irrelevant, it is as significant as liturgical worship. It is itself a kind of worship. For in the

world the "Christian is nonetheless with God; and praying, dwelling upon God, he is nonetheless with the world..... It is only the focus of his attention that is changing."⁶ Hence secular activities undertaken in the spirit of faith, implicit, or explicit, is as powerful a means of coming closer to God as prayer and worship in the strict sense; and for the Christian who is in the world, active participation in the work of building up this earth is not an optional choice but a sacred duty without which he cannot be faithful to God. To quote the Council: "The Christian who neglects his temporal duties neglects his duties towards his neighbour and even God, and jeopardizes his eternal salvation."⁷ Hence the heavy emphasis the Vatican Council has put on Christian responsibility towards society. But the Council knew well enough that the Christians will not be in a position to fulfil this responsibility unless the Christian Community is first renewed from within. In Kerala too, a renewal of Christian life, supported by a thorough going reinterpretation of the meaning of Christian faith, is the most fundamental requirement for our effective presence in the secular spheres including politics.

1. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, No. 26

2. Ibid., No. 40

3. Ibid., No. 1

4. Ibid., No. 43

5. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, No. 5

6. Edward Schillebeeckx: *God the Future of Man*, pp. 80-81

7. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, No. 43

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